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# Eye scream for candy

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**R I T**

**Eye Scream for Candy**

by

**Aaron Ramsier**

A Thesis/Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in

School of Film and Animation

College of Imaging Arts & Sciences

Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester, NY

May 16, 2013

**Committee Approval:**

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Assistant Professor  
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## **ABSTRACT**

*Eye Scream for Candy* is an animated graduate thesis film that chronicles a boy's unplanned evening adventure and the creatures and confusion that drive this outing. It was produced using industry standard 2D, 3D, and audio software.

The following paper addresses the journey taken to produce this film, including, Original Concepts, Goals, Styles and Influences, Production Pipeline, Experience, and Screenings. Additional materials are included to further demonstrate both the paths taken, and not taken.

## ORIGINAL CONCEPTS

The original concept for Eye Scream for Candy was built around a single gag. During his sales pitch, the monster shop keeper was intended to get lost in his thoughts and practically freeze in place with one of his eyes having wandered off into a wall-eyed position. The eye was to be off into space and the other trained near the boy. The gag was to be the boy looking over his shoulder and trying to figure out what exactly the monster was looking at. This gag was the core of this story. Everything else came about as a means to get the most out of this gag. After years of work on this story, it became much too long and had to be cut. This core gag is one of the things that had to go to make the film a more achievable project.

Beyond the core gag, this story was to be about a crazy adventure that the boy gets swept up into, a journey to a fantastic and counter intuitive place, the strange things that happen once there, his trip back home, and the consequences of this journey.

## GOALS

This film is much more ambitious than the previous films that I have made. I wanted to get some experience with things that I had not yet had a chance to tackle: lip sync, a human character, sculpting normal maps, more in depth character performance, a more developed world, and more in depth story. I made these choices so that I could better fill out my skill set and make myself more attractive to potential employers.

## STYLES & INFLUENCES

As for the visual style of the film, the major 3d animated feature film studios influenced me the most. Pixar, Dreamworks Animation, Blue Sky. I wanted the film to feel like a smaller version of a

kind of film that could have come from one of these studios. Brad Bird's work on films like *Iron Giant* and *The Incredibles* influenced *Eye Scream for Candy*, in specific. His cinematic approach to film making gives the viewer a sense that they are experiencing something that is "larger than life". Something that is fantastic and grand, yet still believable for the world in which the story unfolds. Smaller studios that made or make 3D animated shows for television, such as DNA Productions had their influences on the overall look of my film as well. I used this as a guide for deciding on a quality of detail that was achievable within my time constraints and still provide an enjoyable viewing experience.

Beyond the technical look of the film I drew from all sorts of films, shows, and books that I have consumed over my lifetime. Originally, I wanted my film to have the same kind of energy and chaos that *The Muppet Show* brings to the screen once it goes off the hinges. There is nothing quite like the sense of madness created when about 15 – 20 muppets go crazy on the screen all at the same time. I love how this gives one the feeling that this madness is ever lurking beneath the paper thin grip these characters have on their sanity. There is a shot that is directly influenced by *E.T.*, where the boy and the robot fly up the side of a mountain and cross directly in front of a full moon. The neighborhood in this film was somewhat inspired by the ultra tacky-suburban neighborhood from *Edward Scissorhands*. All of the houses are very similar, if not the same as the neighbors, with the exception of which pastel color the owner decided to coat their particular house in. I drew from Alice in Wonderland in another shot that ultimately ended up on the cutting room floor, where the boy is dropped down a trap door onto a huge spiral slide that took up the entirety of the space of the hollowed out mountain. This is the point where the boy "leaves his world behind" and enters the world of the monster shop keeper. Down the rabbit hole he goes, if you will. A mistake that I made was to strive to achieve a level of beauty and detail that is apparent in all of Hayao Miyazaki's films. This beauty and attention to detail has drawn me to his films from the very first time I saw his work, and they remain among my favorites. This beauty and detail instills a level of realism and wonder into the worlds his

characters inhabit that I can't help but appreciate and strive to replicate. I have found that this look and feeling can only be achieved with lots of time and effort. And in the conversion of this look from 2d to 3d, it also requires a lot of set design and many props. While this is achievable, it takes time away from the main characters and their performances which must take priority.

Using the night scenes in films produced by Jim Henson and Brad Bird as a guide for my color palette, I created my first night time scenario in a film. I used those films as a starting point for exploring the aesthetics of night time lighting. Keeping in mind that I wanted the artificial light to be a warm and inviting contrast to the cool colors of the nighttime sky, I set to the task of creating and balancing these opposing types of light to produce the appropriate mood for each shot.

Silhouette is another aesthetic style that I attempted for the first time in Eye Scream for Candy. This was one of the simpler and more straightforward looks I created. While it was not a lot of work to produce this effect, it still made for a dynamic series of shots that have a graphic feel that I found to be successful in creating the desired mood.

## PRODUCTION PIPELINE

The script was the first piece created for this project, some suggestions were made but it was quickly approved. After the story was mostly there, I made many drawings. I drew out the characters, sets, and props until I had something that I thought would suit my needs for the film.

Once that I had a good idea of what assets I would need for my film I got to work building them. I modeled the characters first, this was a pretty straightforward effort yet the monster received an extra step of sculpting a normal map creation for skin detail. Once that I had my characters close to final, I had the rigs built. While that was being accomplished I got to work building the sets. This step, as well as others, continued in revision until the very last stages of the filmmaking process. Texturing began in earnest at this point, as well as the beginning of animation and fixes to the rigs as the need



presented itself. Steps began to blur in their priority at this point, and I dealt with whatever issue seemed to be the most pressing at the time. This stage took the longest of all.

Eye Scream for Candy is intended to be funny. I have been told that I have a strong sense of humor and timing, so I worked to maximize these skills to drive my characters performances. To begin, I would block out a series of actions, for an interaction that I personally found to be humorous. Making sure to allow enough time for dramatic pauses to help build suspense, or set up an expectation that I would then defy. I have learned that this is the essence or core of any joke. First, one must set up an expectation, then provide something other than what is expected. The farther this “other something” is from the expectation, the bigger the laugh. Once I was satisfied that my animation was creating the desired effect, I would pass the animation off to faculty and peers for their feedback. Taking this new information into account, I would then press on with animation. Drawing upon my fine arts education, I would make multiple passes refining the entire shot a little each pass until I was satisfied that the animation was successfully serving its purpose, driving the story onward.

After much work I decided that the film was too long and had to be cut. Cutting this film down was very hard for me, but once I had a cut version that was approved by my advisers, production picked up considerably. This more streamlined version of the film was much more manageable and I began to make notably faster progress.

I was the voice actor for the boy in this film and did the recording for his lines early on. I had two actors perform for the monster and had to make four separate attempts at this to get things just right. The voice actor whose performance I ultimately used was in Connecticut while I was in Ohio. This made for a difficult recording process. I ended up having to pay for two separate recordings where the voice actor is in the studio sound room and I was on the phone giving direction. I am happy with the results.

Once animation was finished, finalizing textures, and lighting began. After completion of each shot, I'd send them off to the render farm to generate each individual frame.

## POST PRODUCTION

Rendering and compositing always feel the crunch as the deadline approaches. While I was able to access the render farm from home, and it was a great convenience, the process was riddled with dropped frames, dropped textures, and a host of other render related oddities. All of which required special attention, trouble shooting, and re-rendering. Compositing was straight forward. Unfortunately, I did not have the time I needed to make the most of this step of the pipeline so it mainly involved setting up the layers of renders that I had generated and rendering them out into the final movie file. I also added the audio to the film at this point

Making this film has been a huge learning experience. Most of the things that I learned were from making mistakes. Overreaching was probably my biggest mistake. I wanted to create a rich world for my story to unfold within, as do most of my favorite films. As much as I would have liked to enrich the world in which this story is set, I have found that the price for this detail is time. Time spent on details that, ultimately, are not necessary to tell the story so, as much as it pained me, it had to go to the back-burner and much ended up on the cutting room floor. Also, I had made some oral agreements with some 3d artists who expressed an interest in helping with my film, and soon learned how hard it is to motivate a person without leverage, such as wages or job security. I didn't have trouble with all of those who pitched in but, I felt quite powerless when I needed something from someone who had lost the will to follow through with their commitment.

On the other hand, I enjoyed the creative control that this project afforded me. But, this turned out to be yet another double edged sword. I could make changes to the story or assets at will, and this was liberating, but I ended up with a film that was too long and somewhat bloated. I had a profound attachment to this beast that I had created and, in my unwillingness to let the unnecessary go, I became bogged down by the larger workload. A fast approaching deadline was the catalyst that finally

prompted me to make the needed cuts and I believe that I still ended up with a decent film.

## SCREENINGS

Eye Scream for Candy was well received at screenings. Most commented that they enjoyed the film greatly, even when critiquing. Comments were made regarding technical errors, as well as for improvements on the pacing and story. While I understand that Eye Scream for Candy is not by any means a perfect film, I value the comments made during screenings and will take them into consideration when going over the film one last time before possible entries into the film festival circuit.

## APPENDIX A - Proposal

### Treatment

Working Title :	Eye Scream For Candy	Start Date	: April/08
Producer	: Aaron Ramsier	End Date	: May/09
Advisor	: Ferris Webby	Run Time	: 3:00 min
Budget	: \$2266	Format	: 3D Animation HD

### Story

A very bored 10 year old boy is visited in the middle of the night by a friendly robot who sweeps him off to a mysterious “candy shop” at the top of the local mountain. When the candy shop turns out to be very different than what the boy had expected he is returned to his room empty handed but gains a new out look on his life and now looks forward to what the next day may bring.

### Synopsis

The story begins with the voice of the boy complaining about how bored he is followed by his mother telling him to go to bed. Later that night, the boy wakes to a strange commotion outside of his bedroom window. He looks to the window and sees some strange lights so he goes closer to investigate. When he reaches the windowsill a robotic hand holding a card with the word “Bored?” written on it pops into view and the boy reads it. He skeptically starts to reply when the hand produces another card. “Craving adventure?”...”Craving some sugar?”...”Hate your sister?”... “Well, come to my candy factory!”...”Climb aboard!”. The boy

is not quite convinced to leave until he sees that his ride is the huge robot connected to the robotic hand holding the cards.

Cut to a wide shot of the boy cheering while riding the robot as it hops and climbs up the mountain taking the boy up and away from his quaint suburban neighborhood. This shot will be somewhat silhouetted with a giant, stylized, full moon in the background.

They arrive at the mouth of a cave that has been modified into some sort of workshop. Warm yellow light pours into the night. There are more robots milling about the mouth of the cave though they are all much smaller than the one that the boy is riding. The giant robot gently lowers the boy to the ground but the boy is skeptical about going inside. He turns back to the robot who just gestures to the mouth of the cave.

The boy hesitantly walks into the shop. There are tools and parts all around the shop and a counter a little further back. Small robots are rolling around here and there carrying out small tasks. He walks towards the counter which seems to be unattended at the moment and looks around. He notices that there is a candy jar with eyeballs in it on the counter and in-mid recoil he hears a voice say, "They're 10 cents a piece!".

The boy jumps and sees that there is a strange little man with a creepy wondering eye behind the counter. He is dressed like a tinkering inventor with a dirty apron on top.

BOY - "What?!"

SHOPKEEPER - "The candied eyeballs! They cost 10 cents a piece"

BOY - "What?! GROSS! I don't want that!"

SHOPKEEPER - "What? Why? Don't you have any money?"

BOY - "No, I don't have any money. That robot outside plucked me straight out of my bed! I'm in my pajamas! What is this all about?!"

The boy looks to the man but can't tell if he is looking at him or not so he looks to where the wandering eye is pointed but only sees a creepy picture of the man and his mother making eyeballs together. Both have giant wandering eyes. The boy makes a face and looks back to the man who hasn't moved. He repeats his question.

BOY - "Ehh...What's this all about?!"

SHOPKEEPER - "Oh, I used to build robots but now I'm pursuing my second love. Candied eyeballs!."

BOY - "Gross....What happened to the robot thing?"

SHOPKEEPER - "Well, ever once in a while....they explode."

They both turn and stare at the nearest little robot that happens to be nearby. It looks up from its task of stacking jars of parts, its eyes dart from the boy to the man and back, and as it raises its hands as if to say leave me out of this. Everyone waits, expecting the bot to explode but it doesn't so they continue their conversation.

SHOPKEEPER - "So, now I'm making and selling candied eyeballs all by myself...Just

like Mom                      used to gouge”

BOY - “Gross”

SHOPKEEPER - “I'm not making any money really though.”

Bang! The small robot explodes.  
(Beat)

BOY - “No kidding.....Did you ever think that kids may not want to eat.....or look at.....or even                      think about candied eyeballs?”

SHOPKEEPER - “Nonsense.”

BOY - “Well....I'm a kid and.....I don't like eyeballs”

SHOPKEEPER - “Yeah, but you're...uh...kinda weird.....I know!....Free Samples!”

BOY - “I don't know if.....”

SHOPKEEPER - “Yes! That’s the ticket!.....Well, you had better be off if you’re not going to buy                      anything. Robot! Take this boy home. And take this box of eyeballs and give them to the next                      child.”

BOY - “I'm really not sure that those are going to hel----”

SHOPKEEPER - “Nonsense, now off with the both of you!”

The man slams the door to the shop behind him and the boy and the robot, now holding a box of eyeballs under one arm, are now left alone together outside of the shop. They look at each other and grin. BANG! Another robot explodes.

Cut to the same long shot from when the robot took the boy up the mountain but now they are on their way back down. The boy is again cheering.

Cut to the boy climbing back into his window.

BOY - “Thanks for the lift, but I still don't think that free eyeballs are the answer.”

The robot just looks back at the boy and gives him a confident thumbs up as if he had never heard him and carries the box to the neighbor’s window. With one more look back at the boy and another thumbs-up it rips open the box, opens up the window, and tosses the eyeballs in. The boy can't bear to watch so he ducks below the window onto his bed and he hears the sound of a bunch of rubber balls bouncing and a high pitch scream of a little girl. He laughs hysterically but covers his mouth when his mother again yells into the room.

MOTHER - “What's going on in there?”

He looks back out through the window and sees the neighbor girl peering out of her window very much confused and covered in eyeballs. One small robot is left outside and is pressed up against the house trying to avoid being seen. The girl doesn't notice and slams the

window.

BOY - “Nothing!” he replies, as the little robot scurries off.

MOTHER - “Well, get back to sleep. You never know what tomorrow may bring.”

BOY - “I’ll say” he responds.

The boy lays back in his bed smiling with his hands folded behind his head. Click. The lights go out. BANG! The last robot explodes in the distance.

### Approach

I plan to use Maya, Silo, Z-Brush, After Effects, Soundtrack Pro, and Final Cut for editing. In this film I will focus on character design, modeling, animation, art direction, and lip sync for the first time. Because this film occurs at night, there will be a lot of deep blues and the inside of the shop will be a warm yellow for contrast. Also, I plan to play up the fantastic other worldliness that resides at the secluded mountain top, pushing the fact that the farther up the mountain the boy goes the stranger the world becomes compared to his home below. I will have to find voice talent for the boy, mother, and shop keeper and am considering finding talent for music throughout the film.

I am looking forward to making this film because some of my favorite movies and other influences are from the Fantasy genre. This film will give me the opportunity to create my own world, and characters, based on reality while giving it my own spin and style to create a place where the unlikely is common and the impossible possible. I plan to combine this world with convincing character animation to take the audience to a world that, at present, lives only in my mind.

## Budget Summary

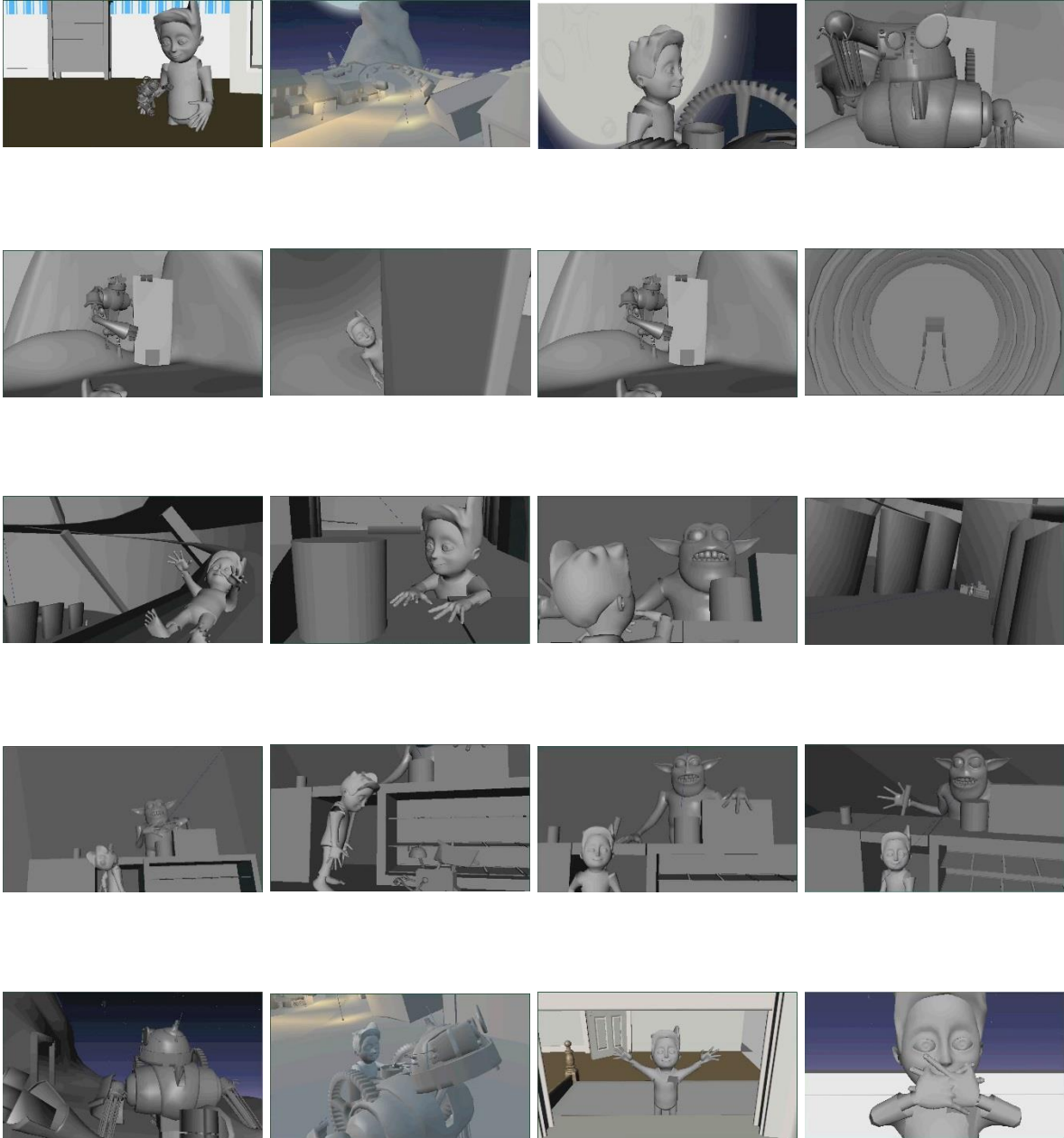
Description			Qty	Cost	Total
Pre-Production	Script				In-kind
	Reference Material	Camera for Ref Footage	1	\$0	\$0
	Design				In-kind
	Storyboard	Paper/Stationery		\$50	\$50
	Sound	Voice	3	\$100	\$300
Production	Computer Hardware	1TB Hard Drive	1	\$280	\$280
		RAM(2GB)	2	\$75	\$150
	Computer Software	Z-brush		\$300	\$300
	Modeling/Rigging				In-kind
	Texturing/Lighting				In-kind
	Animation/Compositing				In-kind
	Editing				In-kind
	Tutorials(DVD, book)	Z-Brush Modeling	1	\$70	\$70
		Z-Brush Texturing	1	\$70	\$70
		Animation	1	\$70	\$70
		Editing	1	\$70	\$70
Post-Production	Music	Composer	1	\$300	\$300
	Media	DVD	25	\$20	\$20
	Festival Entry Fees		15	\$30	\$450
10% Contingency					\$206
Total					\$2266



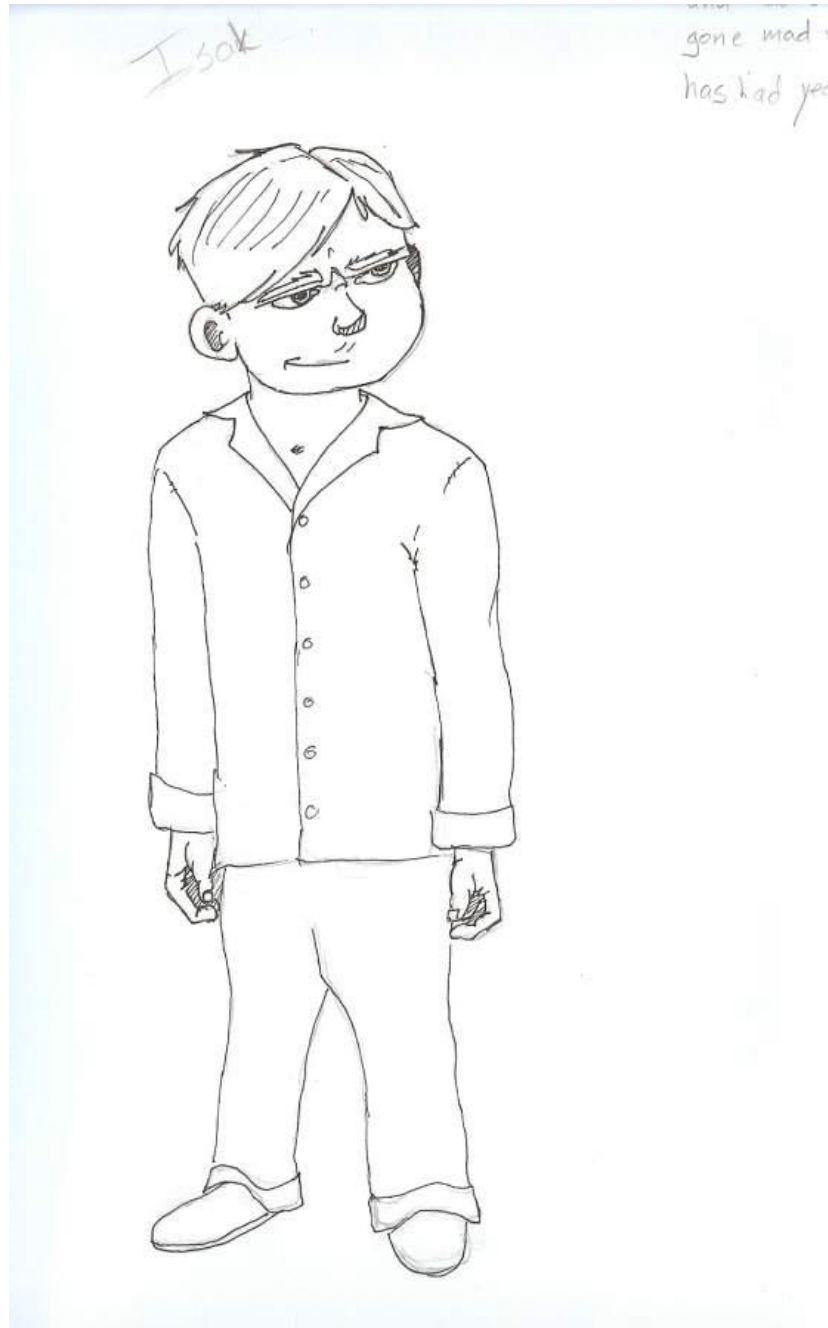
# Timeline

Quarter		Summer												Fall												Winter												Spring															
Month	May07	Jun07	Jul07				Aug07				Sep07				Oct07				Nov07				Dec07				Jano8				Febo8				Maro8				Apr08				Mayo8										
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4					
Pre-production	Script																																																				
	Characterization																																																				
	Storyboard																																																				
	Layout/Design																																																				
	Story Reel																																																				
Production	Modeling																																																				
	Capturing																																																				
	Rigging																																																				
	Texturing																																																				
	Video Ref																																																				
	Animation																																																				
	Lighting																																																				
	Rendering																																																				
Postproduction	Special Effects																																																				
	Compositing																																																				
	Editing																																																				
	Sound																																																				
	Title/Print to Tape/DVD																																																				

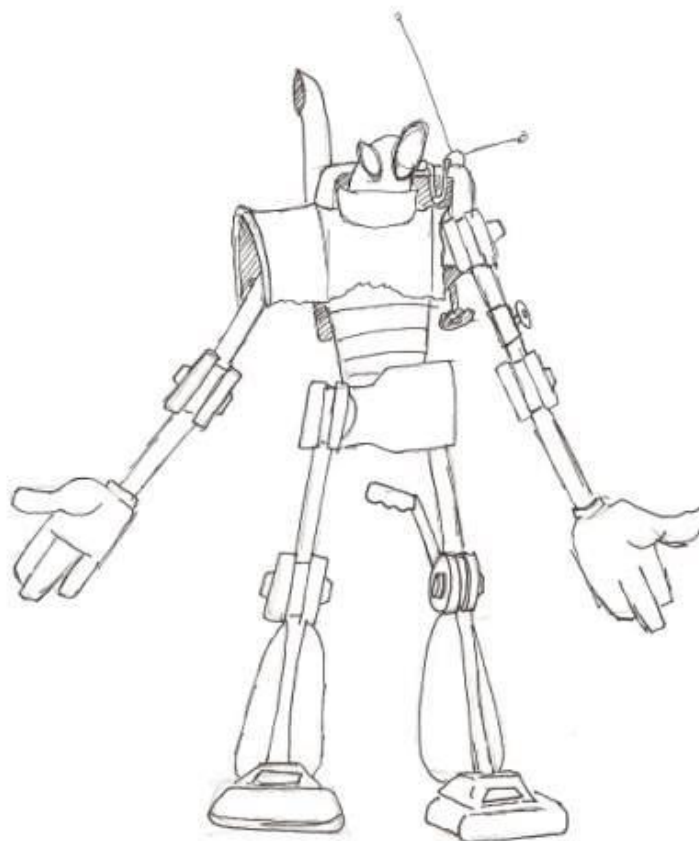
## APPENDIX B: Animatic Stills



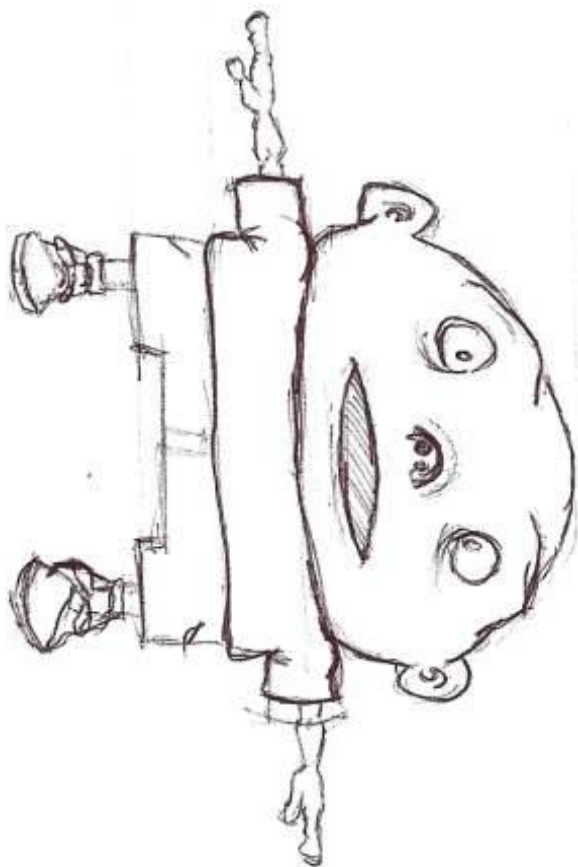
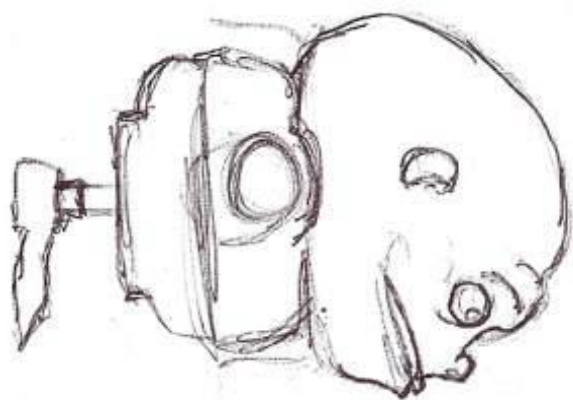
## APPENDIX C: Character / Set Design

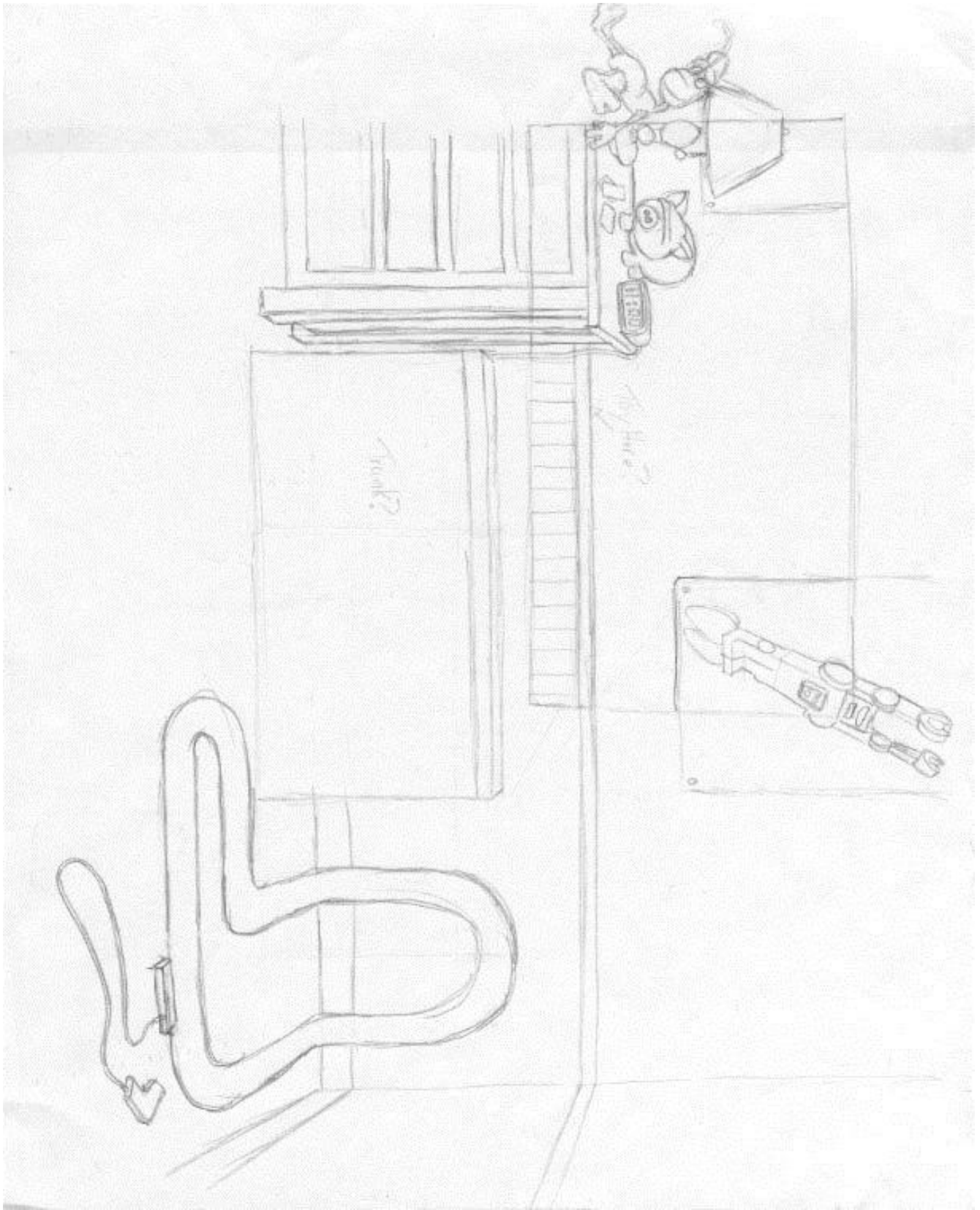


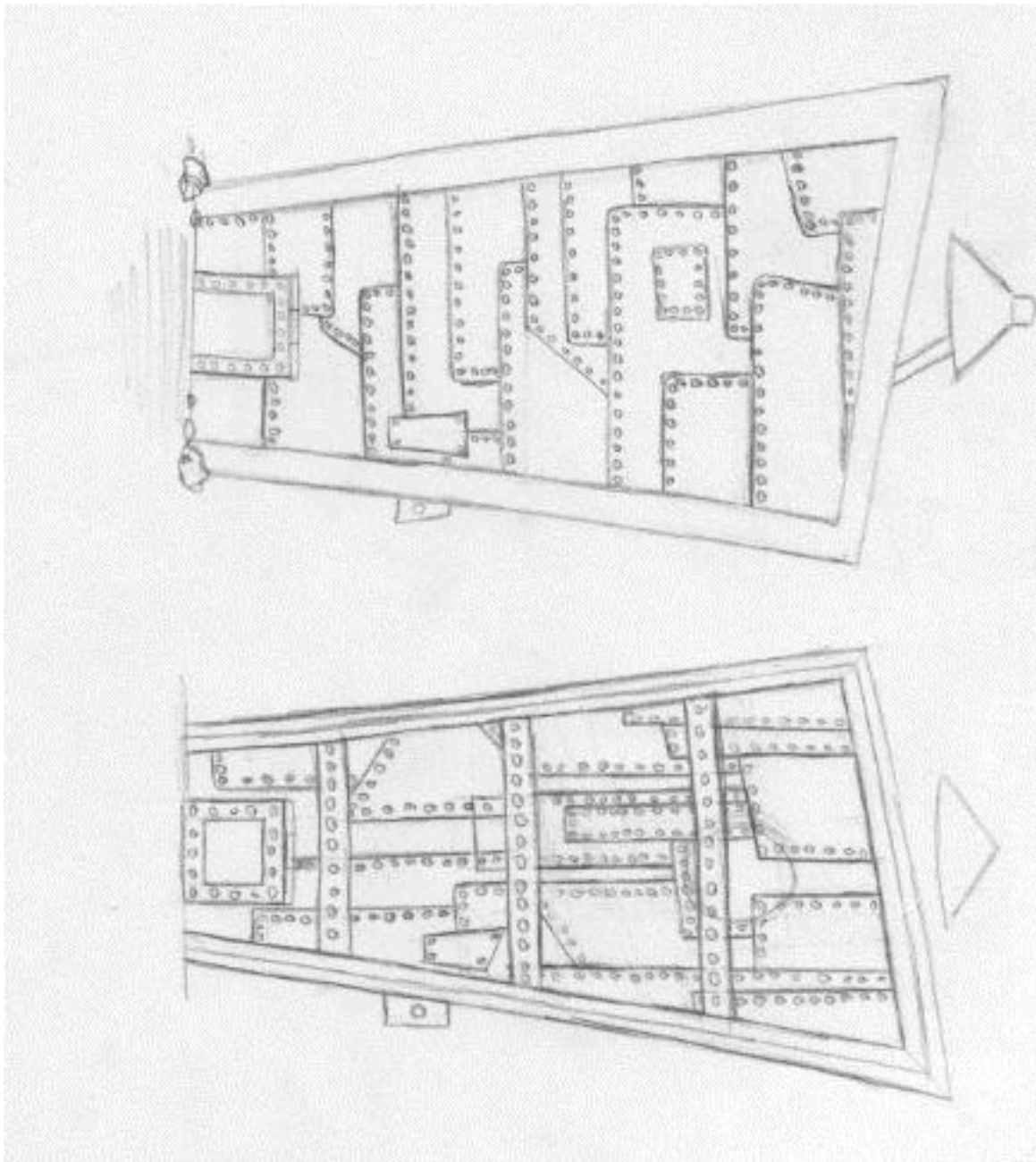
Play w/ scale  
Giant ship (yellow) in tiny door  
The higher up the mountain the "Wildier" it gets



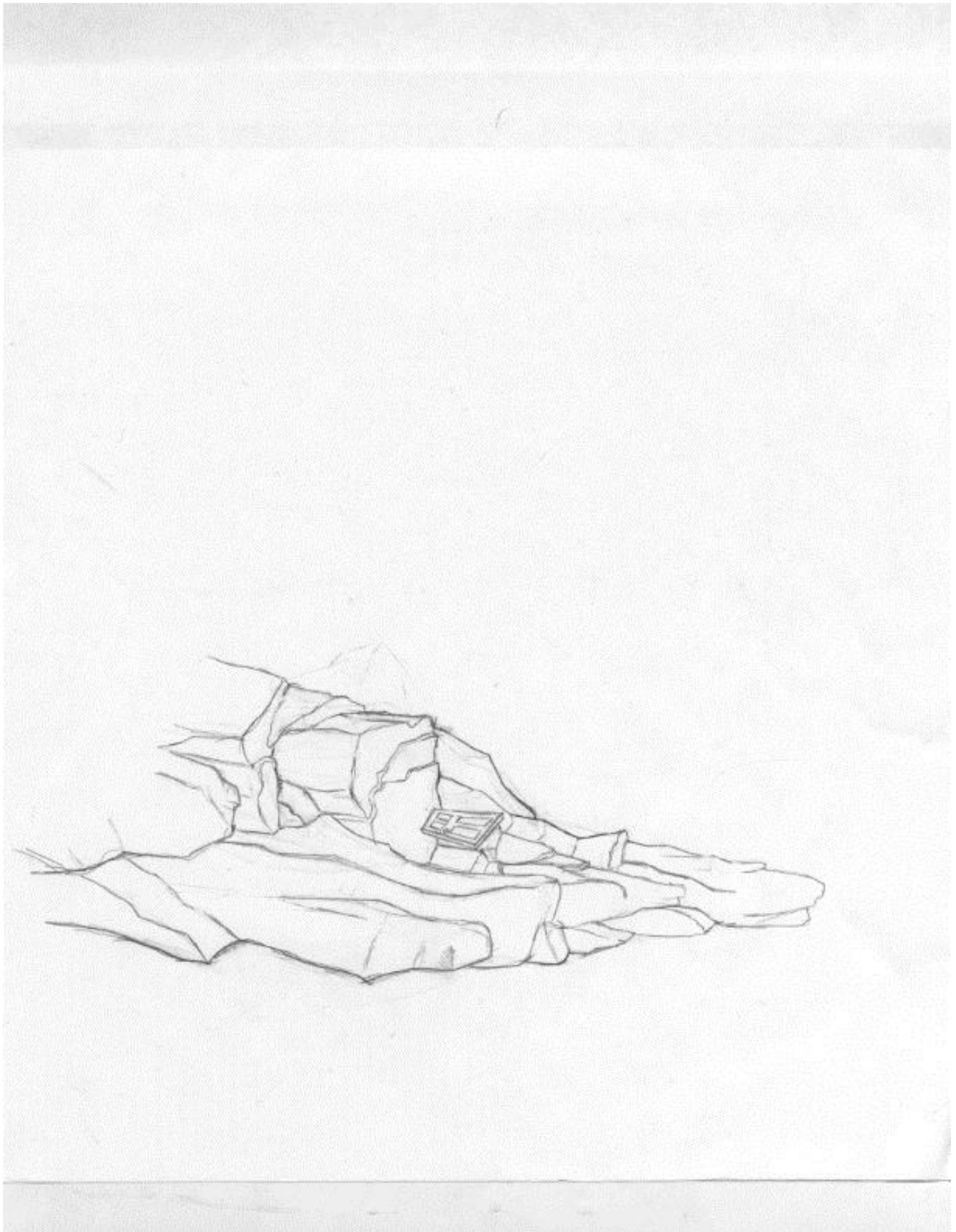
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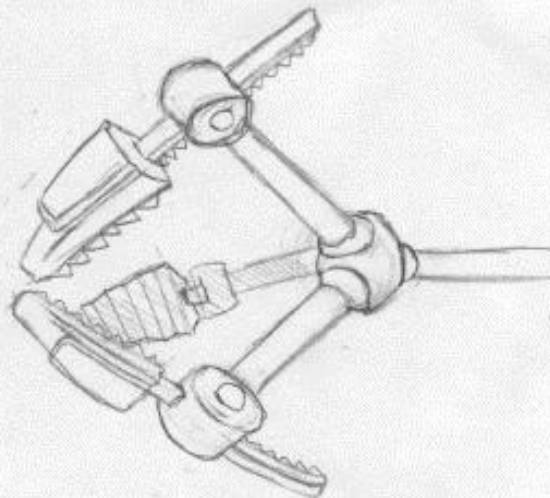
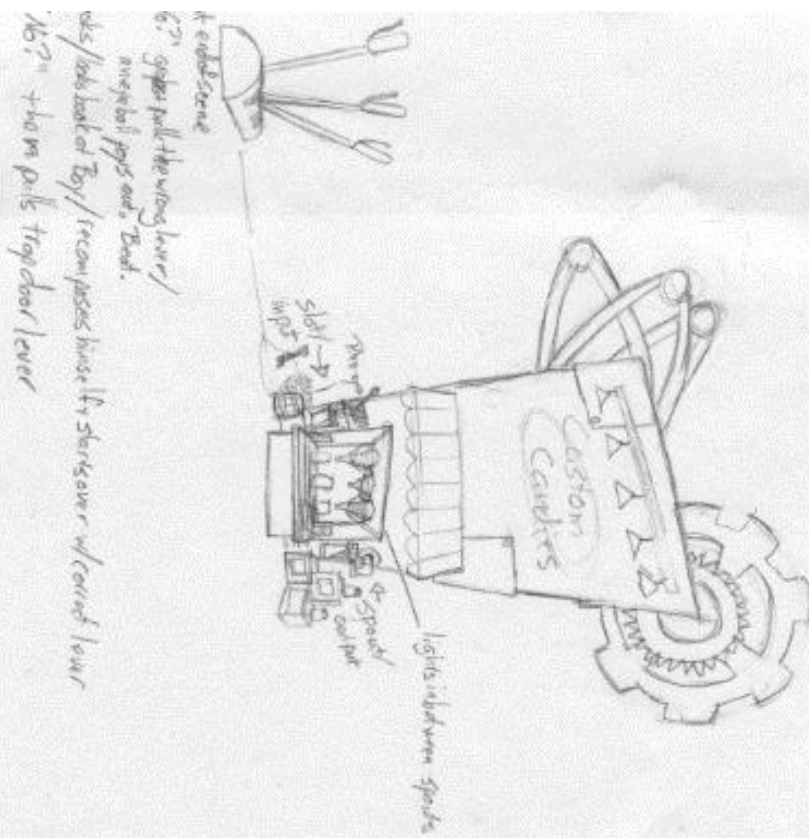












"At end SK should be working on the "Bottling" is epic candy.  
 then he hears the girls scream + clears the counter top  
 or medieval style

## APPENDIX D: Production Stills

